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Gallery and Studio

ULYSSE BUTIN.



PARISIAN art has experienced a serious loss in the death of Ulysse Butin on December 9th, at the early age of forty-six. Butin was a pupil of Picot and Pils, but he had the good fortune to escape early from academic routine and to live in close intimacy with the outside world. His

first appearance at the Salon was in 1868, when he exhibited two drawings of ambulant singers, but it was not until 1874, when he began to go to Villerville, that he found his real and personal expression. At Villerville, with the sea before him, he learned to see, to observe, and to assimilate the strange and picturesque world of sailors and fishermen with their local customs, their grand and simple ceremonies. His first picture from Villerville was "Les Moulières." Then in 1875 he exhibited at the Salon the touching scene of "L'Attente," which won him a third-class medal and proved to be the commencement of his celebrity. Henceforward Ulysse Butin went on affirming his artistic personality more and more strongly with the pictures of "Le Cabestan," "Pêcheuse," "Départ pour la Pêche," "L'Enterrement à Villerville," "Femme du Pêcheur," "L'Ex-voto," and "L'Homme à l'Ancre," all of them pictures full of truth, sincerity, and emotion. In 1881 Butin received the decoration of the Legion of Honor, and two of his finest works, "L'Enterrement à Villerville" and "L'Ex-voto," were bought for the Luxembourg Museum. At the moment of his death Butin was at work on an important decorative work for the town-hall of his native place, Saint-Quentin.

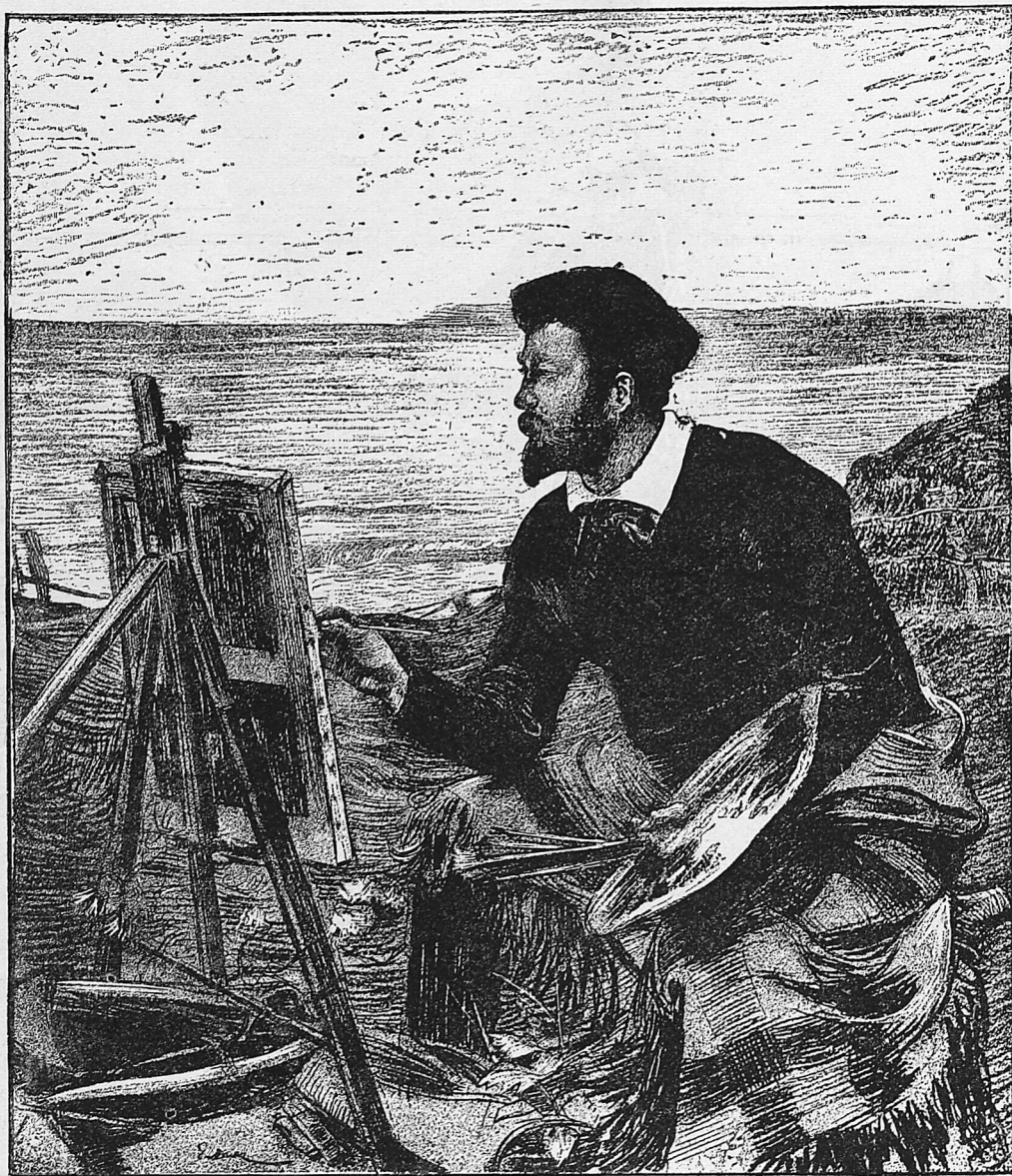
Ulysse Butin was a true artist and a painter singularly original and humanly sincere. He followed in nobody's footsteps, he felt a cordial sympathy with seafaring folks, and he painted them as he saw them, handsome or ugly, old or young, with their placidity, their characteristic build and bearing, finding their expression, their typical physiognomy not merely in their faces but in their gestures and their whole attitude. With great simplicity and largeness of execution, whether in his summary charcoal drawings or in his paintings, he gives to his compositions the maximum of reality; his figures are not models; they are real men and women whom Butin knew; we recognize at once their character, their temperament, their condition; we are at once interested in the dramas of their existence, and we quiver with emotion as we look at the touching and simple groups. Take for instance the "Funeral at Villerville," now in the Luxembourg. The bier draped in black stands in front of the door in the village street; a young man

is kneeling beside it; a girl in a long mantle is distributing the tapers; the mourners stand around with sad looks talking in low tones of the departed one. The scene is of absolute truth just as it must have happened; there is no invention of sentiment, no arrangement of details, no accentuation of pathos, and you cannot look long at the picture without feeling a tightening of the throat and a desire to shed tears. The "Ex-voto" is equally simple and equally touching. Some sailors in the hour of danger have promised the Madonna a little ship if she helps them to safety. The Madonna has heard their prayers and now on a bright sunny morning, dressed in their Sunday clothes and escorted by their families, the sailors have come to the church door, full of faith, to offer to the Virgin, to Notre Dame de Bons Secours, a little

THOMAS B. CLARKE'S PICTURES.

THE managers of the American Art Galleries are evidently determined to prove their faith in American pictures by their works. No sooner was the Salma-gundi Exhibition closed, after a fairly satisfactory career, than an exhibition of pictures belonging to our townsman, Thomas B. Clarke, was opened at their rooms. It attracted a numerous attendance of spectators from December 28th to January 12th, and proved to be of particular interest on several accounts. What Mr. Clarke was doing was known privately to a good many persons, but this was the first time that the public had been permitted to examine the result of his efforts, begun ten years ago, to make a collection of pictures all of them painted

by American artists; and this experiment of Mr. Clarke's was a sufficiently notable fact in itself, seeing that the current of what is called The Encouragement of Art has run steadily in the opposite direction for the last thirty years. The general merit of the pictures, too, was a surprise to the public, who, it must be confessed, have had warrant enough for not expecting to find collections of American pictures either valuable or interesting. And it is to be hoped, too, that some of those who visited the collection felt themselves interested in the fact that the exhibition was one made with a serious purpose and not merely to amuse; its object, as was stated in the catalogue, having been to raise a certain sum toward the establishment of a fund, the interest on which is to be applied as a prize for the best American figure composition at the annual exhibition of the Academy of Design. Now here was an exhibition of pictures which was the outcome of an example set, excellent in itself, and rare in this country in these later days; the collection taken as a whole was one of remarkable merit; and the object of the exhibition commended itself to all who are sincerely interested in the growth of art in this country, so that it will be seen the occasion was one that deserves to be



"ULYSSE BUTIN." BY E. DUEZ.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST FROM HIS WATER-COLOR PAINTING.

model of a ship. The church is on the cliffs, above the village; in the distance the calm sea; in the background gay verdure and sunlight; the church door is open and through it we see the altar lighted up. An old man and an old woman are entering first, taper in hand; behind them a young woman carries the little ship, and the sailor whom the Madonna has saved comes last with his baby in his arms and his little son, walking beside him carrying an immense bouquet of flowers. It is simple; it is charming; it is full of humanity. At the exhibition of Butin's work, which we shall doubtless see at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in the spring, the painter who has been cut off so early will come out a master observer and a master artist, and the loss French art has sustained will be made sadly apparent.

THEODORE CHILD.

remembered. As this article is written while the exhibition is still in its first days, it cannot be told what success it is to have, either as a money venture or as an attempt to interest the public in pictures painted at home. But even in the few days during which the collection has been open, it is pleasant to record the fact that, with one consent, the newspapers at least have hospitably welcomed the exhibition and given voice to the feeling of surprise that so many persons have felt at the pleasing appearance of the pictures taken together—one of the marked characteristics of American pictures having been, as a rule, that a room hung with them was cold in tone, and crude in general effect, that, in short, nothing could be got out of them in a decorative way. Not that it can be allowed that these pictures, even with

their judicious hanging, are remarkable for their decorative effect upon the walls of the handsome gallery of the American Art Association, where all pictures show their best points. But, in a country that has never produced a colorist, it is something that a collection of pictures by native artists should show even so much negative virtue as not absolutely to offend. And although it is evident I think, that the owner of these pictures has not been drawn to the circle of young men who are praying their good angel, if they cannot be written down as of those who love art, that they may be named as among those who love Velasquez, yet he has been so happy in selecting his pictures at the right time, that with few exceptions they all seem to have been painted when the artist's sun was in the meridian, and he warmed up to do his level best. So that the public surprise, while it was reasonable enough in view of the pleasingness of the collection as a whole, yet was perhaps too easily led to an over-generous judgment of the excellence of individual pictures.

Some years ago, one of the best judges of pictures we ever had among us, Daniel Cottier, said that he considered the American artists far ahead of the English, though still far behind what they could accomplish were circumstances made as favorable to them as they are to artists in England. Though nobody else that knows anything will buy English pictures, yet the English buy them, and hardly believe any other pictures worth naming are painted, while in America just the contrary method is pursued, for Americans as a rule would rather buy any picture than one painted by an American. It does not do, however, to give all the credit to surroundings, or, even, to the atmosphere so much talked about. In spite of coddling, in spite of intelligent efforts,

English art is at a low ebb, and there are no more Sir Joshuas and Gainsboroughs and Turners, no more Flaxmans and Stothards born. Among the painters most in repute in England to-day are Leighton and Millais, Boughton, Alma-Tadema, and Tissot. But where would any of these men stand in a European exhibition of contemporary art? Alma-Tadema is the only one that could hold a place, and his is a mere success of curiosity. And of the five, two at least own up to being born out of England, while Mr. Boughton is de facto if not de jure an American, hateful as the fact may be to him, and damaging to his prospects as it might be to have it known. We wish Mr. Clarke's example might show that the tide is turning here, but fashion and the competition of rich ostentatious men have so much to do with the prosperity of art, we fear it will be long before our Midases reach the point of spoiling one another's digestions by displaying their newly acquired Ulrichs and Turners, their Weirs and Ryders, their Bunces and Twachtmans, instead of their Meissoniers and Alma-Tademas, their Millets and Corots. And yet, even were the American stock poor, this were the only way to improve it, to keep the artists busy, painting, and, that it is not a poor one, but well worth generous cultivating, is shown by the evidence in this gallery, of what one individual of moderate means can do, to make an interesting collection.

At present, from this showing, it appears that Mr. Clarke's taste runs mainly toward genre pictures, and to small highly finished works; to the eyes of the new school his collection is wanting in what for want of a more convenient word are called artistic qualities. That such a collection represents the average taste of his countrymen is shown by the failure of a purely artistic collection of pictures, like that of the Bartholdi Loan Exhibition to give general pleasure, while a gallery like that of Mr. Vanderbilt is universally considered to be the ideal of what a modern gallery should be—if only the Millets, and the Corots, and the Rousseaus could be left out.

But it is not Mr. Clarke's fault, supposing that this collection does not fully represent his own taste, if his pictures belong to the school in favor with the most of us, for it is just in poetical, artistic, beautiful painting that we are at present deficient. The state of culture that makes nobler painting possible has not been reached among us yet, and it is but fair to say that those who stand for the finer art have not painted pictures with a lasting claim to admiration. It shows a singular state of mind somewhere that could encourage an artist to paint, or that could induce any one to buy, such a maudlin piece of absurdity, of bad composition, bad drawing, bad painting, as Mr. Dewing's "A Garden," in this collection, and yet it is

such a model, with so unfortunate a nose as the one he habitually paints from, is past our comprehending. But, at any rate, there is no affectation in this work, or far less of it than we are used to in this artist's pictures, and his mannerism, now become wearisome, is here shown in its first harmless bud and unopened flower. Douglas Volk, an artist who set his own standard up, when he first came from Paris five years or so ago, in some broad, vigorous and striking oil studies, but who has never since fully justified hopes that we know to have been well founded, has here the best of his latest works, "The Puritan Girl," which is only wanting as a composition by reason of the spotty effect of the snow-covered tree-trunk, but which has good qualities enough in its simplicity, directness, and natural feeling to cover a multitude of sins were there a multitude to be covered. In the case of two artists, Mr. Smedley and Mr. Ulrich, Mr. Clarke has been fortunate in securing the best early productions of men who are sure to make an important mark in the future. Mr. Ulrich's work shows, even in his choice of subject, the true instinct of an artist, who sees his field in the ground on which he stands. "What dish will you be helped to, Mr. Thoreau," said the prose-poet's host to him at a bountiful table. "The nearest," was the answer. Would that our artists might oftener choose the dish which nature is all the time setting before

them! And not only does Mr. Ulrich paint the actualities of his time, but he paints them in a way that, in spite of likelihood, really reminds us of no one, certainly not of his Munich master, nor of the French or Belgian miniaturists. True to himself, Mr. Ulrich's work will one day take an honorable place alongside of the Jan Steens, Terburgs, and Teniers, but he too must pray to be delivered from the regimen of chalk which is the bane of all schools to-day



"WAITING AT VILLERVILLE." BY ULYSSE BUTIN.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST FROM HIS PAINTING IN THE PARIS SALON OF 1875.

pleasant to say that its impudence seems all the more offensive because it has pushed its way into such decorous company.

These pictures of Mr. Clarke's surprise the public, not because they are so generally good, but because so many artists have done far better than we are accustomed to have them do. Thus, Mr. Blashfield, who, though a really clever workman—I use this word with all respect—has somehow never been fortunate in the subjects he has exhibited, is here seen in a decorative composition with excellent qualities of drawing and arrangement, and which would be wholly enjoyable if only the demon that dwells in the French chalk cliffs, and throws their dust in the eyes of all the artists, home and foreign, who have their nursery in the Beaux Arts, could be exorcised, and leave our painter free to the sweet ministries of nature. Mr. Murphy, too, an artist always welcome from the start, as showing perceptions that must some day work for themselves, free from the shackles of imitation, has painted for Mr. Clarke several pictures that would justify the best opinion of him, if he were not every now and then insisting on quartering his own arms with those of the French sentimentalists, Huet and Corot. George Fuller, again, has seldom painted anything better than the head of a girl in this collection, though how he could ever have chosen

but the Dutch. Mr. Twachtman, whom I learned to enjoy in Venice, and who never shows quite to my mind elsewhere, has nevertheless a good picture here that will make him well remembered, and Messrs. Turner and Maynard are represented by pictures which, though small, are of as good quality as pictures by the same hands of more pretension. But space fails us to make larger mention of this collection, which well deserves a fuller description. In the formation of such a gallery, and in the success that has attended his earnest efforts, Mr. Clarke has set an example that cannot fail to bear good fruit. He has shown what can be done with small means well employed, and he has shown cavillers that our artists can, if they are spurred, do work of which neither they nor their countrymen need be ashamed. May the augury be a happy one, and Mr. Clarke be so hard pressed by the rivalry he shall excite, as to develop all his obstinate determination to carry off the best of everything in the future as he has in the past, and make his present collection dim in the light of his next one. CLARENCE COOK.

MISS ANNE WHITNEY'S statue of Harriet Martineau has received quite general commendation by Boston artists and critics. It is regarded as a carefully studied and well executed statue, which, without



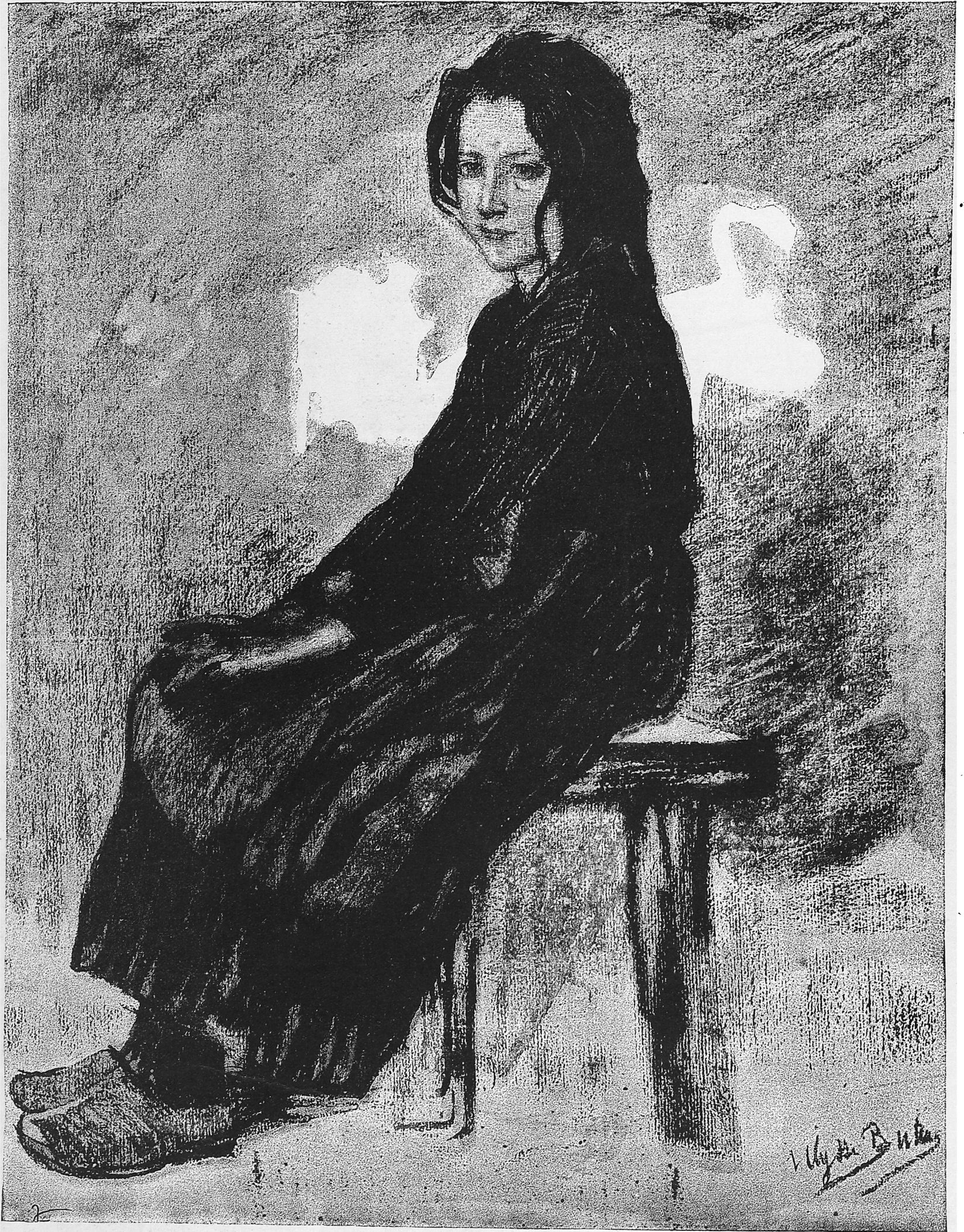
"THE SAILOR'S WIFE." BY ULYSSE BUTIN.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST FROM HIS PAINTING IN THE PARIS SALON OF 1879.

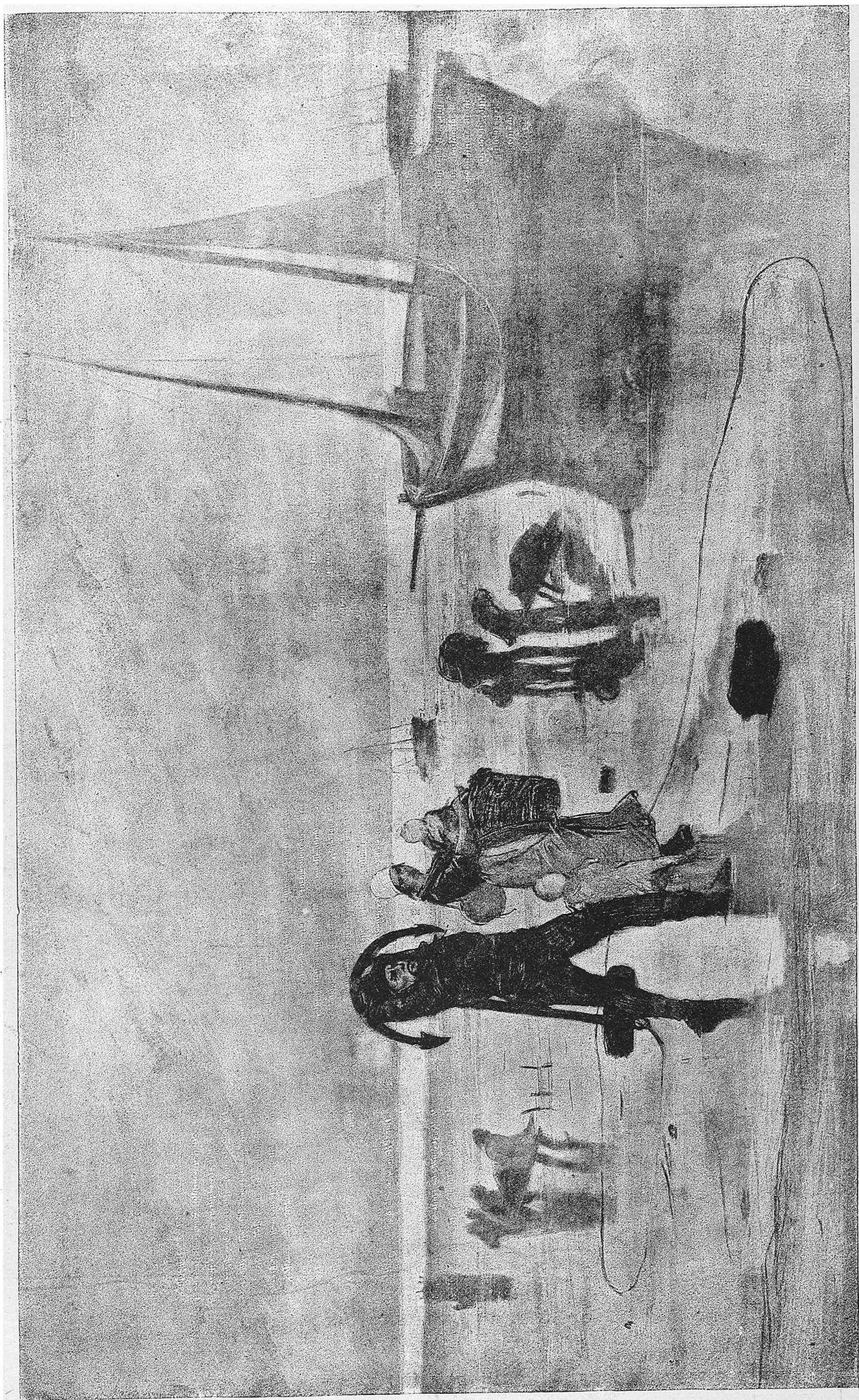


STUDY FOR "THE EX-VOTO." BY ULYSSE BUTIN.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST FOR HIS PAINTING IN THE PARIS SALON OF 1880.



"THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER." CHARCOAL STUDY BY ULYSSE BUTIN.



"THE TILTERS OF THE SEA." REDUCED CHARCOAL STUDY BY ULYSSE BUTIN.